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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-fourth year

Letter dated 23 November 2009 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The situation in the entirety of the Occupied Palestinian Territory in all its aspects remains critical, with conditions deteriorating and tensions rising daily. In this regard, the situation in the Gaza Strip is particularly grave.

It has been over two years since Israel, the occupying Power, began its illegal, inhumane blockade on the Gaza Strip, a blockade that has brought Gaza's economy to a grinding halt and has caused the socio-economic living standards for 1.7 million Palestinian civilians to plummet. The suffering of the civilian population was further deepened by the brutal, merciless military aggression waged on Gaza by the Israeli occupying forces. The wounds, scars and trauma inflicted by the series of Israeli assaults that wreaked human havoc and wanton physical destruction throughout the Gaza Strip continue to be felt to this day as the population remains under siege and reconstruction and recovery continue to be obstructed by the occupying Power. Successive Israeli military attacks, which peaked a year ago during the 22-day aggression, have killed and injured thousands of Palestinian civilians, including hundreds of children and women.

Today, while the memory of the Israeli atrocities in the last aggression are still fresh in our memory, Israel, the occupying Power, is attempting to further raise tensions and reignite the cycle of violence, with the attendant grave consequences.

On Sunday, 22 November 2009, in the early morning hours, Israeli warplanes struck several civilian targets in the Gaza Strip. These attacks injured eight Palestinian civilians and caused widespread trauma to the families living in the area. Israeli warplanes also targeted metal workshops in a densely populated neighbourhood in Jabaliya in the northern Gaza Strip and also struck areas in Nuseirat in central Gaza as well as other areas near the Rafah border in southern Gaza.

These attacks are stark manifestation of recent statements made by the Israeli military Chief of Staff, Gabi Ashkenazi, before high school students on Friday,

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13 November 2009, when he clearly stated that war is Israel's response to United Nations General Assembly resolution 64/10 on the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict (Goldstone Report). Ashkenazi said that "the Goldstone report deserves a response", and that Israel "must explain the justice of that war and explain that there is the possibility that we will be forced to act again". Such statements warrant the immediate attention of the international community as they constitute clear threats and indicate the blatant contempt Israeli leaders have towards the United Nations, international law and the lives of the Palestinian civilians under their occupation. Moreover, such statements reaffirm the deplorable mindset of impunity guiding the actions and policies of the occupying Power's political and military leadership.

It is also abundantly clear that Israel's intention is to deflect world attention from its ongoing illegal settlement campaign in the West Bank, particularly in and around Occupied East Jerusalem, by taking such provocative and violent actions in the Gaza Strip. Moreover, Israeli leaders have made it clear that they have not given any serious consideration to the findings and conclusions of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, hence the threat of carrying out yet another merciless and destructive military aggression against the besieged and suffering civilian population in Gaza.

Israel is flagrantly rejecting and violating its obligation as a Member State to respect the General Assembly resolution on the Goldstone report by launching investigations into the serious violations of human rights law and grave breaches of international humanitarian law it committed during its military aggression against Gaza between December 2008 and January 2009. The international community must uphold its responsibilities in this regard and act to defend its expressed collective will and the integrity of the international system by ensuring Israeli compliance. Israel's disregard of civilian lives and of international law must be confronted directly, firmly and immediately. Standing idly by while such threats and actions continue can only encourage the occupying Power to add another long list of war crimes to its heavy dossier. Palestinian children in Gaza, who are still suffering trauma from Israel's last war, deserve a principled international position to ensure that they are spared further undue suffering.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 349 letters to you regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 18 November 2009 (A/ES-10/469-S/2009/598), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations